

COMPREHENSION AND COMPLIANCE TO ELEVATOR SERVICE SIGNS

John W. Brelsford
Department of Psychology
Rice University
Houston, TX 77251

Michael S. Wogalter Paul B. Begley Lori F. Scancorelli Jay H. Williams Stephanie A. Terry
Department of Psychology
North Carolina State University
Raleigh, NC 27695-7801

This research examined comprehension of and compliance to four different elevator service signs. The purpose of the signs was to dissuade people from tying up the elevator when they are only going up one floor or down two floors. Three of the four signs were described by Chapanis (1964): an original sign and two others that he offered as possibly being better. The fourth sign was an enhanced version that used human factors principals derived from research studies on the topic since the Chapanis (1964) article. The enhancements involved the use of color, signal word, signal icon, pictorials, and concise, clear wording. In Experiment 1, participants rated the understandability of each sign and their willingness to obey the signs' instructions. Both questions showed the same pattern of results. The original sign was rated lowest and the enhanced sign was rated highest; the two other signs received intermediate ratings. In Experiment 2, the signs were placed on each floor of six buildings in conspicuous locations near the elevator call buttons. People's use of the elevators during the posting of each sign as well as during five no-sign (control) periods was measured. The experimenter rode the elevators and counted the total number of passengers using the elevators as well as the number who rode up only one floor or down less than two floors (noncompliers). Results showed that only the new enhanced sign had an effect on compliance compared to the other three signs and the control conditions. These results suggest that the sign principles developed from research in recent years are likely to assist in promoting comprehension and behavioral change.